

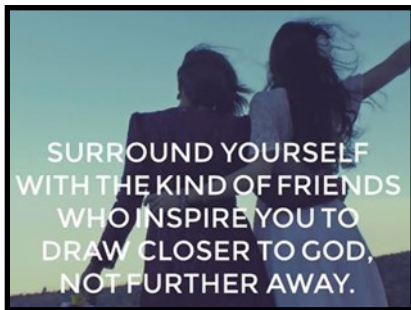


THE NEW COVENANT CONNECTION

New Covenant Presbyterian Church

Dear friends,

As I have reflected and prayed about how to best reach out to all of our new neighbors, I remember that I had a book by Scott Sauls called *Befriend, Create Belonging in an Age of Judgment, Isolation, and Fear*. So, I picked it up and began delving into it. One of the initial critiques said "In an age of isolation, loneliness, and social fragmentation, there is a tremendous opportunity for the church to offer what Jesus offers - deep community to those who need it, namely all of humanity. With disarming candor and gritty realism, Sauls demonstrates how to apply the gospel to befriend a wide range of broken image bearers - a group that includes you and me."



Ann Voskamp in the Foreword reminded me that "It is best to befriend those **NOW** whom we hope will be our friends with for all eternity." WOW! That hits the spot. Then Ann continued by pointing out that it is good to consider anyone a friend who drives us closer to God for wherever our roads cross with others' roads, we can

experience the power of the Cross, and the Cross can be lifted high and lift us both up and into the presence of God. The Cross can even make us true friends.

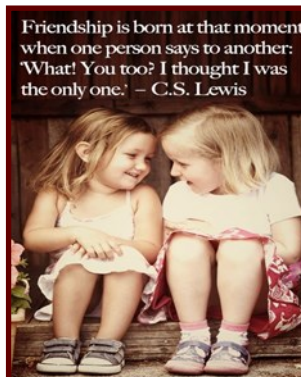
Of course, we all realize that **REAL** friendship is hard, but the less real versions of it are also less rich. And the less real versions take many different forms such as -

- **Digital friendships** (primarily social media platforms which means that very few folks ever actually meet each other face-to-face)

- **Transactional friendships** (where we view people as resources rather than valuable human beings - where we use people as a means to an end like advancing our careers or gaining access to social circles)

- **One-Dimensional Friendships** (relationships that revolve around a single shared interest and not much else, like a hobby or a set of religious beliefs)

C.S. Lewis says that all true friendship **BEGINS** when one person looks at another and says, "**You, too?**"



~ continued ~



SEPTEMBER 2023

A NOTE FROM OUR PASTOR.. 1

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(EVENTS, BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES)

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This kind of friendship - the multilayered kind that exposes us to the grit of our own and each other's lives; the kind that positions us to love across the lines of our differences; the kind that leads us to lay down our lives for the sake of another - works a lot like two pieces of sandpaper (or sand blocks) being rubbed together. The friction causes sensations that initially irritate and burn. Yet, over time, the effect on both pieces of sandpaper is the same; they both become smoother, NOT in spite of the friction, but BECAUSE of it.

Real friends not only agree but disagree; real friends not only applaud each other's strengths but challenge each other's weaknesses; real friends not only enjoy life together but struggle through life together; real friends praise and apologize to each other and they not only rally around points of agreement but learn from their disagreements.

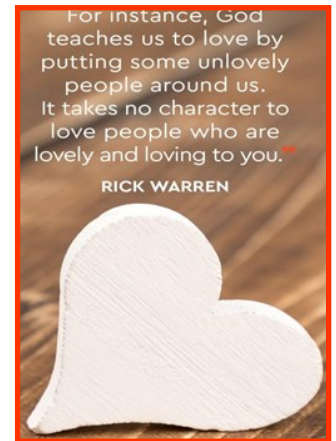
Real love, real friendship is **vulnerable** and **risky** and **costly** and **discomforting** and **disquieting** and **agitating** like sandpaper. But the alternative is a heart that ends up in a relational casket. And who wants that?

Real friendship happens when we move **TOWARD** the people we are most tempted to avoid. These are the people who are best equipped to challenge our perspectives, push our buttons, and require us to put on love.

Scripture tells us that love is patient and kind; it does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude; it does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or resentful nor does it rejoice at wrongdoing but it does rejoice in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never fails. (I Corinthians 13 paraphrase)

And, do you know WHAT never fails? Or better said, WHO never fails? Jesus Christ never fails. And Sauls continue to provide examples of what it could look like for us to befriend others as we try to create belonging in a world of judgment, isolation and fear. And the icing on the cake is that we encounter Jesus along the way; in fact, we walk alongside us on the journey!

So, what kind of life do you want? There is a real, loyal, across-the-lines-of-differences kind of friendship and there is a lesser, surface-level kind of friendship. Lesser friendships leave us distanced, isolated, and afraid. But we can become the best version of ourselves and come to know Jesus best, through real friendship as taught through scripture. Let's become our best selves, friends!



Your partner in ministry,

Carol

SEPTEMBER 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 OUR DAILY BREAD	2
3 COMMUNION & SPECIAL COM- MUNION OFFER- ING for ODB; DEACONS MTG	4	5	6	7	8	9
10 CE CLASS BEGINS @8:30 AM; TRUSTEE MEETING	11	12 CE CLASS BEGINS @10:30 AM;	13	14	15	16
17 CE CLASS 8:30 AM; SESSION MEETING; INT. DINNER @ 4	18	19 CE CLASS @10:30 AM;	20	21	22	23
24 CE CLASS @ 8:30 AM	25	26 CE CLASS @10:30 AM;	27	28	29	30

EVERY SUNDAY—WORSHIP AT 10 AM FOLLOWED BY FELLOWSHIP

9/1 1st Friday @ Our Daily Bread
 9/3 Communion & Special Offering
 For ODB
 Deacons' Meeting
 9/5 Barbara Bennett's Birthday
 9/7 Janet Glaser's Birthday
 9/9 Bob Megonigal's Birthday
 9/10 Pat Deverell's Birthday
 Carol L. McBride & Mike Easter's
 Anniversary
 9/10 Trustees' Meeting
 9/15 Rita Morris' birthday
 Carol & Jay Fisher's Anniversary
 9/17 Session Meeting

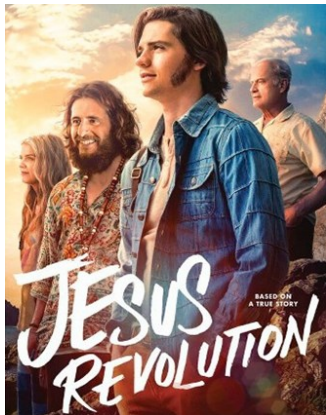
9/20 Donna Casey's Birthday
 9/23 Cheryl Shield's Birthday
 9/26 Paul Willbanks' Birthday
 9/30 Pam Kidd's Birthday
 Donna & Jim Casey's Anniversary



Fellowship

AUGUST

ICE CREAM SOCIAL + A MOVIE ON 8/13 AT 6:30 PM



If you attended the Ice Cream Social and Movie Night, then you had a great time! There was all kinds of ice cream and toppings and even some fresh fruit. And after indulging in this sweet treat, we watched **the movie - Jesus Revolution** which is based on a true story. It is about flawed, broken people who find themselves at the face of a movement far greater than themselves evolves; it also points out the origins of many elements of



Ice Cream Social

faith that have metastasized into problems for the Church such as the megachurch culture. A brief discussion followed.



FORT DELAWARE EXCURSION ON SAT. 8/26

On 8/26, many of us took a ferry to Pea Patch Island and toured Fort Delaware, off the shore of Delaware City. We were quite fortunate to have a special friend (John Rutkowski, Georgia's boyfriend) as our costumed interpreter. It really helped us imagine life in the 1860s. We watched several programs, including artillery and musketry demonstrations, tours and interactive activities.

SEPTEMBER

INTERNATIONAL DAY DINNER ON 9/17 AT 4 PM

Please consider joining us for a very special dinner. We will have food from China, Jamaica, Cuba, Norway, India and Korea. If anyone has a special dish from another country that you would like to bring, then bring it on. We plan on decorating tables from each of these countries. We are looking forward to an evening full of great food and fun!



Worship & Special Offerings

P.C.U.S.A. SPECIAL OFFERINGS



**WE GO
FOUR
FOR
FOUR**

Did you know that we are a Four for Four Congregation? What does this mean? It means that we receive all 4 denominational Special Offerings so let's make sure you know what they are about. Being a 4 for 4 Congregation means that we declare our connection with the ministries of the Presby-

terian Church (U.S.A.) and we join in the efforts of Presbyterians around the corner and around the world to share God's grace and endless love.

The one we are receiving from mid-September through the 1st Sunday in October is the **Peace and Global Witness Offering**. A gift to the Peace & Global Witness Offering enables the church to promote the Peace of Christ by addressing systems of conflict and injustice across the world. NCPC will be keeping 25% of this offering to connect with the global witness of Christ's peace. Traditionally it is used to help with local peace/witness opportunities. Mid councils retain an additional 25% for ministries of peace and reconciliation. The remaining 50% is used by the Presbyterian Mission Agency to advocate for peace and justice in cultures of violence, including our own, through collaborative projects of education and Christian witness.

Each time we are preparing to receive one of these offerings, we will remind you of its purpose. The general timeline is:



- **Peace and Global Witness** (culminates on World Communion Sunday - the 1st Sunday of October)



- **The Christmas Joy Offering** (taken through the month of December)



- **One Great Hour of Sharing** (taken when leading up to Easter)



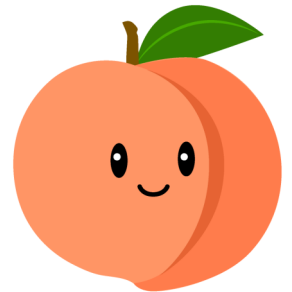
- **Pentecost Offering** (taken leading up to Pentecost)

Outreach Ministry



OUTREACH TO OUR COMMUNITY ON 8/19

NCPC, via Beverly Cook, joined Church on Main to provide delicious PEACH ice cream and hospitality for festival goers. Beverly wore her NCPC shirt and was most gracious in helping people receive some cool ice cream, water, and in finding the restrooms. Thanks Beverly for representing our church well!

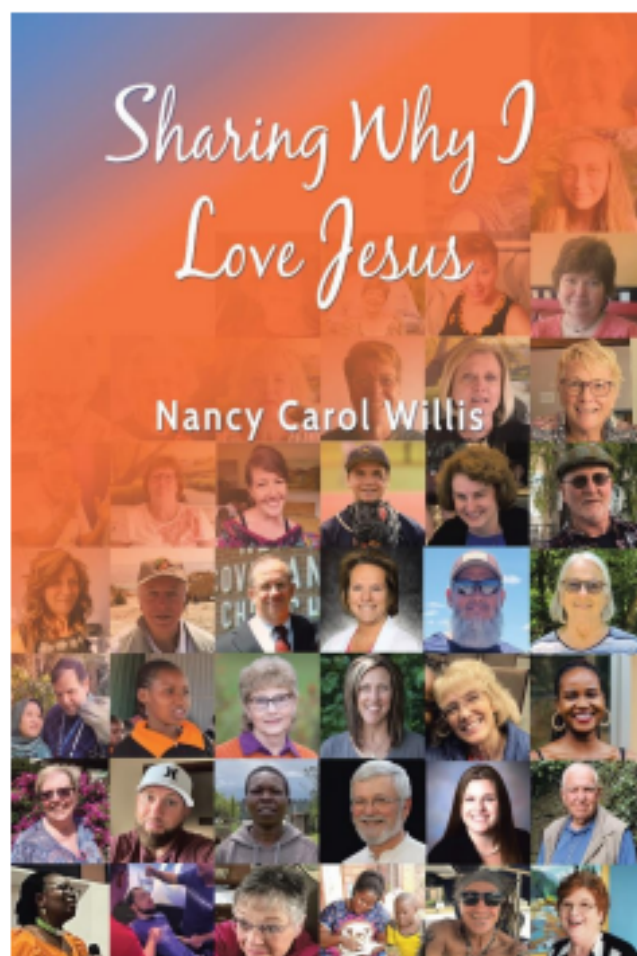


out of the
ORDINARY
CATERING

And that's not all folks. The Session is increasingly trying to envision a variety of outreach events to let our community know that one and all are welcome. The next idea is to have a food truck in our parking lot paired with conversations with those who stop in. Soon, we will be talking with *Out of the Ordinary Catering* who also has a food

truck and gets rave reviews! Please be in prayer for this effort and we may need your help.

Study Guide Published!



“Sharing Why I Love Jesus” from Christian Faith Publishing author Nancy Carol Willis is an enjoyable opportunity to reflect, grow, and celebrate your relationship with Jesus Christ.

Have you ever wondered about your faith story? Do you even have a faith story? Why do you have a faith story? Where did it come from? How does it work? How do you grow your faith? Should you share your faith story? How do you share your faith story?

Perhaps you're like me—an “ordinary Christian.” You look forward to joining your church family for Sunday worship. You greet people at the door, ring bells, or bake cookies for fellowship time. You pray often, enjoy your daily devotional, and look forward to the next Bible study. Fantastic!

But if you're like most ordinary Christians, the thought of sharing your faith story with others makes your stomach churn.

You're not alone!

The Sharing Why I Love Jesus study guide is more than a how-to book about writing your faith story. It lays a biblical foundation for faith and illustrates faith through stories and examples. The study questions will prompt you to explore your own faith in greater depth. Then you will write your faith story and practice sharing it in today's world.

The study guide can be used individually or in a small group setting.

Let's get started!

Published by Christian Faith Publishing.

Order your copy TODAY!

**[https://whyilovejesus.org/
study-guide/](https://whyilovejesus.org/study-guide/)**

**ISBN 979-8-88751-859-6
on Amazon**

\$14.95

Cash or check - see Nancy

Clerk & Personnel Reports



CLERK'S REPORT

The Session's regular Stated meeting for August was held on August 20th following the Worship service. Due to scheduling difficulties and vacations the September Stated meeting has been postponed until October 1st. Our membership numbers remain at 50. Our next Vital Congregations meeting with Nate Phillips will be in September.

The session approved for the Pastor to share communion during home/hospital visits on any day (not restricted to a Sunday) that is convenient/suitable for the communicant desiring to have communion.

We will be having a Congregational Meeting on 9/3 following worship for the purpose of electing Carol A. McBride as a deacon, Class of 2025 (to replace Jim Inners, who resigned).

We had a brief Session meeting on Sunday August 27 to receive Ken Hudson's resignation as Music Director. We accepted it with deep regret and we began brainstorming how to fill this void. Please be in prayer for this large task and let us know of any suggestions.

Yours in Christ,

Pat Wright, Clerk

PERSONNEL REPORT

As our Clerk of Session mentioned, we regret to inform you that our beloved Music Director, Ken Hudson, has resigned. The Session has begun working to find a replacement but we need help from you all. If anyone knows of someone who might be able to fill this position, please contact either me (Pam Leeson, Personnel Chairperson) or our pastor, Carol. It's when we all pull together that we are able to make great things happen.

This job may end up looking different from all that Ken did, but we do need some leadership and talent in the area of music ministry. In any case, it never hurts to talk to everyone, so please give us any pertinent contact information, both for temporary and permanent help. And please bear with us as we faithfully lead our congregation.

God knows **WHAT** and **WHO** we need. And we do **NOT** need someone who can juggle everything at the same time. May the Spirit lead us into the future with faith and trust.

Pam Leeson, Personnel Chairperson



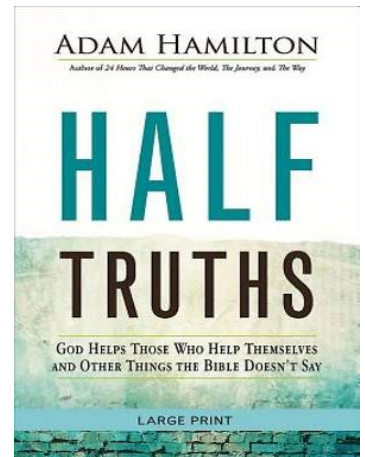
Christian Education Report

Weekly Christian Education Classes Resume This Month



Many thanks to Cheryl Shields for leading a class on several *Prophecy Watcher* videos. These classes explored current events and related them to biblical prophecy. Thanks Cheryl!

Both Jane and Carol will be out of town for several weeks in September but regular class members have stepped up and will be leading discussions on Adam Hamilton's book *Half Truths, God Helps Those Who Help Themselves and Other Things the Bible Doesn't Say*. We will resume with Chapter 3 following Labor Day on the week which begins on 9/10.



After we finish the Hamilton book, we plan on doing another study by Rabbi Jason Sobel and Kathie Lee Gifford. More details to follow in the next newsletter.

Donna Casey will be teaching another Bethel Bible Class on Tuesday evening via Zoom. Please let Donna know if you are interested in participating in this class.



Mission Report

Our Daily Bread: We served 182 meals on First Friday, August 4th. The cost of the meal was about \$200.00. The response of the congregation to the Our Daily Bread/First Friday special collections on Communion Sundays has been spectacular!!! Our little congregation surely believes in the mission and in the spirit of Matthew 25. God Bless all of you.



Neighborhood House: We continue our regular donations of non perishable food items to the community organization that services the Middletown-Odessa-Townsend area. In addition, Neighborhood House is collecting book bags and school supplies for the start of the school year. If anyone wants to bring in completed book bags and or supplies, NH will receive donations until Labor Day at their location at 811 N. Broad St. , Suite 219 in Middletown (next door to the Goodwill). If you prefer, bring the donations to church and I will deliver them to Neighborhood House next week.



STRONGER TOGETHER...is the new motto of Neighborhood House, which in 1977 opened an office here in Middletown. And New Covenant Presbyterian Church has been a supporter since that date!!! Neighborhood House operates on a foundation of Christian principles, namely:

- Assist and guide people in finding self-sufficiency and success.
 - Provide leadership, support, and advocacy to the community.
- Their services include:
- Crisis alleviation, emergency food pantry, aid with energy bills, Christmas adopt-a-family, budget management and nutrition workshops, clothing closet, and aid in finding employment.
 - The focus of New Covenant is to support our less fortunate neighbors in the MOT area through donations to the food pantry with non-perishable food items and toiletries.

May God help us to continue this mission through the next decade!

Operation Christmas Child: Pam and Skip Leeson will be heading up this year's shoebox collection for children around the world. Stay tuned for more information but NOW is a good time to buy items for the child(ren) you want to support. More info on the next page by Pam. Boxes will be dedicated in mid-November.



Jane Adams, NCPC Liaison
to Neighborhood House &
Pat Wright, Elder for Mission



Mission Continued



OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

Ever wonder what happens to those boxes we fill at Christmas time? Well I did...so I scheduled myself to volunteer at the Samaritan's Purse Shoebox Processing Center in Baltimore for November 30th. Not sure what I'd find but headed out that day to check it out. After about 1 1/2-hour drive, I was greeted at the door by volunteers that directed me to where I checked in. The center was very bright and had a beautiful Christmas tree. The place was bustling

with activity. Since I was a solo volunteer they assigned me to a group from the Word Christian Fellowship International Church in Hopewell, N.J. This group was made up of all Filipinos.

They welcomed me and we became a team of twelve. There were about two dozen stations set up just like the one we worked at. Our job was to open each box and inspect them to be sure there were only things that were permissible. It was interesting to see what some people had placed in their boxes including letters and photos. One box had a picture of an elderly man with a note that said he was 92. He encouraged the recipient to love Jesus. Very touching. Another box had a picture of a seven-year-old boy who wrote what it was like in America. After the boxes were inspected, they were sealed and sorted into shipping boxes by gender and age. When that box was full it was taped up and placed on a conveyor. That day the boxes were designated for S. Africa and Honduras. I was there from 9am to 4pm and during that time over 15,000 boxes were processed. That center had processed over 350,000 boxes up to that date (approx. only 2 wks!)

The atmosphere was very positive! Good music and smiles abound! They would pause every so often to tell a story of someone who had received a shoebox and how it impacted not only their life but also their family or village. Prayers were given as a blessing on the boxes and the volunteers. One time they were asking about where the volunteers came from. I was surprised to hear some came from as far away as N. Y. or FL. I was the only volunteer from Delaware that day!

When we broke for lunch my team invited me to join them. They even bought my lunch! Chick- Fil- A comes in at mealtimes for people to purchase a meal. The team I worked with have come to volunteer for several years and drive almost 2 1/2 hours to get there. The Pastor and I are now friends on Facebook!

I really enjoyed the day...was busy and standing the whole time. I went home tired but excited about the experience and I look forward to going again next year! Because of the wonderful experience, I have decided to volunteer with OCC (Operation Christmas Child) and Skip is joining me. We hope to complete the training by the end of August. Our team covers the Central Delaware area, and we will be the Church Relations Volunteers. Our job will be to support churches/groups that are already doing the shoeboxes, but also to reach out to others to join in! We are excited to be working with this mission and helping it to grow in the Middletown area. Operation Christmas Child has distributed over 200 million boxes in over 150 countries in the 30 years since they began. That's an amazing number of children that learned about Jesus' love and compassion. In addition, many families and communities came to know and love Jesus through this program also.

Watch for shoebox activities here at New Covenant. We'd love to increase the number of children that will learn about Jesus through our gift of a simple shoebox. One shoebox per child will show the love and care we have for them. They will know we are concerned about them, and they are not alone. To God be the Glory!



Pam Leeson

Frog Corner

F.R.O.G. CORNER: *Forever Rely on God*

Don't forget the meaning behind the acronym **R I B B I T** :
Revere, **I**nvoke, **B**less, **I**nspire, and **T**rust in the Lord.



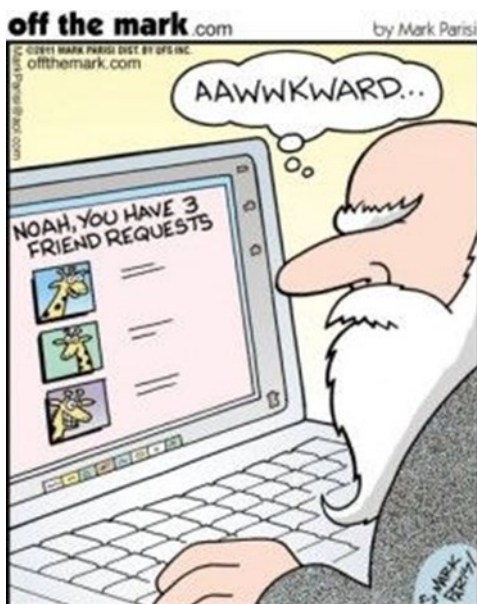
Bent over and obviously in pain, the old man with a cane hobbled laboriously through the sanctuary and into the pastor's office while the choir was practicing. Ten minutes later he came out, walking upright and moving with grace and speed. "Good gracious," the choir director exclaimed. "Did the pastor heal you by faith?" "No," the old man said with a smile. "He just gave me a cane that wasn't six inches too short!"



Early one morning the husband and wife were arguing over who should get out of the warm bed to make the coffee. Finally, the wife folded her arms and said decidedly, "You have to make the coffee. It's in the Bible!" The husband was shocked. "Is not! Show me!" Pulling out her Bible, the wife opened it to one of the New Testament books and declared, "It says right here — HEBREWS!"



God is talking to one of his angels and says, "Do you know what I have just done? I have just created 24 hours of alternating light and darkness on Earth. Isn't that good?" The angel says, "Yes, but what will you do now?" God says, "I think I'll call it a day."



"But there's not enough space for Thou shalt not wear socks with sandals."

Trustee & Deacon Reports

The Trustee Meetings are open to all and is normally scheduled each month on the 2nd Sunday after Church Service. We did not hold a Trustee Meeting during the month of August. Our next Trustee Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, 10 Sep 2023.

You will start to see trucks moving dirt behind, and around our church within a week or so. The developer is starting to fill in some low spots on his land. Within the next year or so, you may see some houses being built around our church. This is the reason our church was placed where it is. We need to start thinking about how we can start early and contact our new neighbors to become part of our family.



Also hope you noticed that our “redone” beds in front of the our buildings + the one around the sign have really blossomed this summer. Our ladies are doing a great job of managing their care and we thank them immensely!



Your Friendly Trustees,
Al, Bill and Bob

DEACON MINISTRY

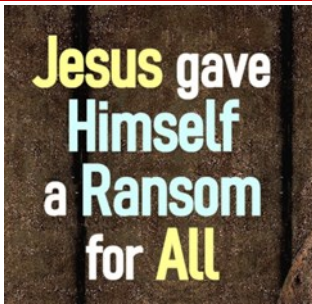


The deacons continue their care of the congregation. We oversee the Shepherd Ministry where we partner with the elders to care for our own. A shepherd always looks after his or her sheep. We also manage the Fellowship Events and September brings a special treat -

INTERNATIONAL DINNER ON 9/17 AT 4 PM

One and all are invited and encouraged to bring one of your favorite foods from another country. For more info, take a look at the Fellowship Page.

NCPC STEWARDSHIP



Deeper Magic

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." Ephesians 1: 7-10

The great Christian writer, C.S. Lewis, loved words and ideas that had seemingly gone out of style. And he wondered what ideas that so move some people lose their grip on the next generation. So, he often used old ideas because he truly believed that they had some magic in them.

Take, for example, the words **RANSOM** and **REDEMPTION**. They are no longer very popular words. We "redeem" coupons and stock certificates, and a quarterback "redeems" himself after leading his team to a victory. When the price of something is too high, some still use "a king's ransom" to describe it, but these words are shadows of their former selves.

In Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, he tries to bring these gems of old words back to life. The great lion, Aslan, "redeems" the traitorous Edmund from the clutches of the White Witch by offering to pay a "ransom." The price for Edmund's freedom is Aslan himself, and this great lion is sacrificed on a stone table.

BUT, there is a deeper magic according to Aslan. He said that "when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead...Death itself would start **working its way backward**." And it's the same with Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. God's claim on us is not merely the result of having created us. As Creator, God owns what he made but titles and deeds do not necessarily inspire loyalty. Using the words "ransom" and "redeem" to describe what Jesus Christ does for us helps us tap into the "deeper magic" that exists in God's love for us for while we were yet sinners, Christ ransomed us with himself.

God's love is present in creation, but its depth truly show God's love when God takes the price of redemption upon himself and ransoms humanity from sin and death. Sometimes the idea of ransom comes close to its old meaning. When hostages are seized by terrorists, at times, a soldier may offer to place himself in harm's way in exchange for the life of the hostage. It's a heroic deed. Imagine the gratitude and appreciation a hostage released in this way would feel toward the person who gave himself in ransom!

That kind of gratitude is the reason we are willing to give every square inch of our lives and every square mile of this world to God. Because God, through Jesus Christ, has given that which is dearest to him in order to redeem us for himself - to ransom us from the clutches of sin and death. In the face of such love, no other response makes sense. And that is what being a **GOOD STEWARD** is all about - **living lives of GRATITUDE in response to God's precious gift!**

